
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: Conservation Community

Finding: *(i.e., Conclusions reached after investigation and/or evaluation of facts)*

The use of appropriate building materials helps prevent homes from ignition in a fire.

Background and Supporting Evidence: *(A short statement justifying the Finding and describing desired outcome(s); usually no more than half a page.)*

Studies have shown that with the right building materials, homes can be constructed so that they have a good chance of withstanding a fire (most successful when in combination with defensible space). Certain building materials are more susceptible to ember ignitions, which was one of the main causes of homes lost in the Angora Fire. Additionally, embers from burning homes ignited adjacent homes, indicating that using proper building materials reduces the risk to both that home and adjacent homes. California has utilized the scientific findings from studies of building materials to pass new Building Code standards which require new homes to be built using materials that can resist ember ignitions. Chapter 7A of the CA Building Code (The new standards apply to all homes in CA built starting 1/1/08). Residents on the NV side of the Basin should be provided with the same level of protection as those on the CA side. Additionally, in the Fire Chiefs' "9-point letter [Sept. 2007]," there was recognition that the new building codes should be utilized Basin-wide.

Additionally, there are actions and modifications that existing homeowners can do to help reduce their chances of ember ignitions as well. Studies have shown that clearing roofs of flammable debris, installing double-paned windows, placing "flashing" between wood fences, decks, etc. and covering vents (e.g. attic vents) and open areas (e.g. under decks) with wire mesh, and other actions can save a home in a wildfire (for examples and more information, see www.firewise.org).

Finally, one of the major causes of homes burning is due to wood roofs igniting by embers (Cohen 2000). There are many homes in the Basin which have wood shingle roofs, thus posing a threat to not only that home, but all of the surrounding homes as well. Replacing wood roofs is one of the most effective retrofits a homeowner can do. Besides posing a significant fire hazard, homes with wood roofs are less likely to be protected by fire professionals in the event of a multi-home fire. Fire professionals have indicated that they will fight to save the

home that has the best chance for survival—those with defensible landscaping and proper building materials (and maintenance, e.g. clearing flammable debris from rain gutters, decks, etc.). However, replacing existing wood roofs is expensive and therefore difficult for many residents to afford.

Recommendation(s) *(Based upon an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation(s) should be made to the Governors):*

1. TRPA should adopt California's new building code standards Basin wide, so that the same level of protection is provided to Nevada residents.
2. TRPA should work with fire experts focused on structure protection to adopt regulations and/or programs that facilitate the retrofitting and maintenance options so homeowners can better protect their homes as well as their neighbors' homes.
3. Fire personnel, regulatory agencies and other entities, communities and other stakeholders should develop a program to replace every roof in the Tahoe Basin. This program could be based on obtaining low-interest loans, grants, tax breaks/insurance rate reductions, and other incentives to help homeowners afford the retrofits.

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas):*

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

☐ Cost

Unknown. There will be costs to implement the programs for #2 and 3 above.

☐ Funding source

A funding source is needed..

☐ Staffing

There will be a need for staff time to be spent on the TRPA amendments and in assisting homeowners (in cooperation with fire personnel) for #2 and 3 above.

☐ Existing regulations and/or laws

Recommendations #1 and 2 would require regulatory amendments to TRPA's Code. Number 3 may or may not require regulatory amendments to TRPA's Code, depending on how the program would be established and implemented to insure success.

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety

Science proves that these activities can save homes from a fire. In fact, with proper defensible space as well, homes have survived while crown fires raged just 100 feet away.

- ☐ Environmental

These activities would result in fewer homes burned in the next fire, which will significantly reduce the environmental impacts associated with a wildfire.

- ☐ Interagency